United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) calls on Iraq to begin destruction of facilities at Al Atheer; Iraq claims site is being used for civilian purposes.

+ IAEA says no significant levels of radiation exposure or contamination occurred at yesterday's incident at Leningradskaya Nuclear Power Plant.

+ United Nations Protection Force Commander in Yugoslavia moves into his headquarters in Sarajevo; hears reports from Sector Commanders following their week-long reconnaissance missions in protected areas.

+ Committee on Information to begin session at Headquarters to review United Nations public information policies.

+ High-level meeting on African common position for environment/development conference to be held at Headquarters on 29 and 30 March.

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The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said today that despite "lengthy and detailed explanations" given by the Iraqi technical team on the civil nature and functions of the Al Atheer Centre, the Agency remained convinced that the technical core of this facility was designated for special processes needed for nuclear weapons development and manufacturing, including uranium metallurgy.

The IAEA has therefore informed Iraq of its decision to proceed with the destruction of the relevant facilities and equipment at the site, in accordance with Security Council resolution 687 (1991). The destruction will begin by mid-April.

The statement follows meetings from 20 to 24 March between the IAEA and an Iraqi technical delegations, requested by Iraq to clarify the role and functions of Al Atheer and its nuclear-weapons-related capabilities.

(more)

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The IAEA said it reached the conclusion that certain buildings at Al Atheer had been designed to accommodate activities related to nuclear weapons activities after completion of its inspections and detailed analysis of documents taken from Iraq - and confirmed during the meetings.

In related news, the ninth ballistic missiles inspection team today witnessed the start of the destruction of Iraq's ballistic missiles production and repair facilities.

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According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), no significant levels of radiation exposure or contamination have occurred at yesterday's incident at Leningradskaya Unit 3 Nuclear Power Plant in the Russian Federation.

The Agency said in a press release issued at Headquarters that the incident had been rated at level 2 on the INES scale by the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy. This would indicate that there are no releases of radioactive materials to the environment above the normal authorized rates. However, IAEA said, there was an indication of a somewhat higher than authorized release of iodine gas from the stack.

The IAEA has previously announced that it will undertake a detailed study of the safety of the light-water graphite moderated (RBMK) reactors as the one in Leningradskaya. An initial meeting is scheduled for 6 to 10 April in Vienna.

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The Commander of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) today moved into his headquarters in Sarajevo and participated in a flag-rising ceremony. The building, a former postal and communications facility that was made available by the authorities, can provide office space for up to 500 UNPROFOR personnel.

Force Commander Satish Nambiar today also received reports from his four Sector Commanders following their week-long reconnaissance missions in the designated United Nations Protection Areas.

UNPROFOR support units from Canada, Sweden and Norway continue to arrive in the area of operations. The strength of the UNPROFOR Civilian Police (CIVPOL) currently stands at 126.

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On Monday, 30 March, the Committee on Information will begin a new 18-day session during which it will continue its examination of United Nations public information policies and activities, as well as its ongoing efforts to promote establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order.

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With regard to the public information area, the Committee will focus on the activities of the Organization's 61 information centres, implementation of a system-wide information programme for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC). The Committee will have before it reports by the Secretary-General.

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A high-level meeting on the African common position for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June will take place on 29 and 30 March at Headquarters.

Sponsored by the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD) and the Global Coalition for Africa, a Washington-based organization, the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the main objectives and basic elements of Africa's common position for the conference, with partners from the industrialized countries.

Among the participants are high-level Government officials from the Netherlands, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Botswana, Kenya and Norway, as well as the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Development and the Secretary-General of UNCED.

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